IT'S MIKE DEWINE'S FAULT AND OTHER TRUTHS ABOUT THE CATASTROPHE

I. The Catastrophe, Not Least for Most American Jews

The Catastrophe, which is what I have taken to calling the reelection of Donald Trump, is Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine's fault.

I'll explain that verdict below. But in this "Newsletter of the American Jewish Experience," I note first that The Catastrophe is one not least for most American Jews.

A Catastrophe for most American Jews because Jews strongly favored Harris over Trump. Her second strongest voting block, after black women (92%), was Jewish women (88%). And an estimated 79% of all Jewish voters cast their votes for Harris.

And a Catastrophe for the political convictions of most American Jews, which is to say center-left or J Street Jews, as well. Take Trump's naming Mike Huckabee to be his ambassador to Israel. Huckabee supports annexation of the West Bank, and has claimed that the Palestinian people don't exist, with CNN quoting him as insisting that their identity was "a political tool to try and force land away from Israel." Jeremy Ben-Ami, head of J. Street, has charged that Trump's naming Huckabee "stands in stark contrast to the definition embraced by the overwhelming majority of Jewish Americans, of a liberal, democratic and secure Israel which can only exist with Palestinian self-determination."

II. Mike DeWine, Villain

But back to DeWine. In an October 2024 New Yorker article, Susan Glasser wrote about Trump's comments concerning Trump, Springfield, Ohio, where DeWine was born, and Haitian immigrants living there. These immigrants, Trump had said: "were eating the dogs, eating the cats, eating the pets of the people that live in Springfield"; had "taken over" the town; and were all in the U.S. illegally. Then, implying that Springfield's Haitians were all "savage criminal aliens," he promised that he would, if reelected president, deport them all. Glasser wrote that DeWine was "outraged enough by Trump's slurs about his hometown and the diligent legal Haitians living there to speak up about it. He went on TV. He wrote an op-ed in the Times. He gave an interview. And, at the end of them all, he said 'Why yes, of course, I am still voting for Trump.'"

But what if, instead of reaffirming his support for Trump, DeWine had declared that he was "withdrawing my endorsement of former president Trump, and will be voting for Vice President Harris?" And what if he then campaigned vigorously for her in Ohio?

The arc of the presidential campaign would likely have changed in Harris's favor.

When DeWine, in the first week of October, reaffirmed his support for Trump, the polls argued strongly there was no path to victory for the former president except through Ohio and its 17 electoral college votes: the polling averages in the seven swing states were so close (within a point or two, with Harris ahead in at least three of them, including two of the Blue Wall states, Michigan and Wisconsin) that Trump's only reasonable chance of victory required him to hold onto three electoral college rich red states: Ohio. Florida, and Texas. Salient in this context is that DeWine was (and is) the most popular governor in Ohio history; he had won reelection in 2022 over his Democratic opponent, by 62.4% to 37.3%, and by 1,031,152 votes. Salient also is that the 538.com polling average in early October favored Trump by 7.7% in Ohio, outside the margin of error but not by all that much. So, a reasonable threat of an 8% shift in the vote, a threat reasonable indeed if the immensely popular DeWine announced that he was now supporting Harris, would have put Ohio into play, forcing the Trump campaign to divert substantial resources from the swing states to Ohio. The same reasonable threat, by opening up a credible alternative path to victory for Harris than sweeping the three Blue Wall states (Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Michigan) would have given a considerable momentum/ enthusiasm/ contribution boost to the Harris campaign.

We cannot know for certain whether, if DeWine had endorsed Harris and campaigned for her, that would have made the critical difference. But strongly supporting the conclusion that they would have, is that the final margins for Trump were close in six of the seven swing states, and very close in the critical three Blue Wall states: less than 2% in Pennsylvania and Michigan, less than 1% in Wisconsin, 2.2% in Georgia, 3.1% in Nevada, 3.4% in North Carolina. Moreover, the view that the most popular governor in Ohio history could not have, by his endorsement of and campaigning for Harris, shifted 8% of the vote in that state to her, is way less persuasive than the view that he could have.

So, deeming DeWine to be The Catastrophe villain makes sense.

Correct? No, incorrect. For a few reasons, including that the endorsement of

Harris and/or the harsh condemnation of Trump by prominent Republicans–some way more prominent than DeWine (e.g., former VP Dick Cheney, former Rep. Liz Cheney, Gen. James Mattis, Trump's Secy. of Defense, Gen. John Kelly, Trump's Chief of Staff)–did not help her enough. Same for the 200 former Bush, McCain and Romney staffers who had endorsed her.

III. Causation Theories for The Catastrophe

The villain is DeWine theory is wrong, but it is a site better than at least three of the most prominent Catastrophe causation theories. These three theories, and four other prominent causation theories out there include the following.

1. The Democratic Party ignored/abandoned the working class.

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2 The Nate Silver theory that President Biden and Harris herself are the villains, with "Trump's win . . . [being] mostly Biden's fault " for, among other things, deciding to run for a second term, and, according to Silver, for, during the campaign, stepping on Harris's message and allowing White House aides to bad mouth her), but that "still, . . . [Harris] was a mediocre candidate."

3. The incumbent party theory.

4. An organized and skillful right wing disinformation campaign.

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5. Harris: black, female, of south Asian heritage. Racism, misogyny, and nativism won it for Trump.

6. Voters (enough of them) voted: their pocketbooks, blaming Harris for inflation; their nativist views, blaming Harris for everything they thought was bad about immigration and immigrants, which was a lot; their traditional cultural values, blaming Harris for her perceived "woke" views, such as support for DEI.

7. This was a turnout election and Democrats did not turn out, Harris having received at least six million fewer votes than did Biden in 2020.

Catastrophe causation theory #1 (working class ignored/abandoned) is hugely wanting on its own terms given that President Biden has been the most progressive and most pro-union president in the postwar period. (Among other things: he made outstanding progressive appointments to the NLRB; increased funding for it; infused $36 billion into the Teamsters Union pension plan; his

Department of Labor changed overtime eligibility rules, boosting wages for more than 4four million workers; the economy added 16 million jobs during his administration). Catastrophe causation theory #2 (Harris was a mediocre candidate) doesn't hold water either, given that she came within 1.4% of winning all three Blue Wall states, (236,898 votes of the total votes for president cast in those states)–*and thus winning the election*–in what Silver himself says was a "difficult electoral environment" for her, one in which in which Harris was required "to navigate . . . [un]easy waters," such as immigration and inflation. As for Catastrophe causation theory #7 (Democrats did not turn out), that is much less a causation theory at all (i.e., one explaining *why* Trump won) than a statement of fact explaining *that* he won; it is akin to a declaration that he won because he got more votes than Harris, in part because many fewer Democrats voted for her than her campaign had thought would do so. But *why* did Democrats not turn out? Several theories suggest themselves, including two that are variations on two of the causation theories noted above. One is that antipathy to Trump, which drove Democratic turnout in 2020, had diminished by 2024, political amnesia having set in. A second is that the time for a change dynamic (i.e., Trump's incumbency), which also drove Democratic turnout in 2020, worked to depress Democratic turnout in 2024, Harris being the candidate of the incumbent party. A third is that among Democratic leaning voter cohorts, such as younger voters, progressive voters, and minority voters, the motivation to vote for Harris was less than it was to vote for Biden, because these voters felt that the Biden-Harris administration had not sufficiently fulfilled the hopes their votes for Biden in 2020 had represented. A fourth is Republican voter suppression tactics (including, in Georgia and North Carolina, legislative changes by Republican legislatures) that disproportionately affected minority voters, a strongly Democratic leaning cohort.

IV. A Truth about What And/or Who Caused The Catastrophe

Different magistrates, all capable will judge different Catastrophe causation theories differently. However they are judged, all the Catastrophe causation theories identified above–and all the other Catastrophe causation theories out there that I have seen–are subject to a common failing.

This failing is that all these theories attribute The Catastrophe to a principal cause (e.g., the right-wing disinformation campaign) or to a single villain or set of villains (e.g., Biden and/or Harris).

There is no principal cause for The Catastrophe and no principal villain or villains to blame for it. The size and diversity of the national electorate in 2024–about 245 million eligible voters, including, critically, about 93 million nonvoters–oblige this conclusion. This conclusion restated is that Trump's victory is only correctly understood as the result of a complex interplay of diverse factors, reflecting the varied motivations and interests within the electorate.

These diverse factors, all of them in play, all of them contributing to The Catastrophe (some more, some less, it is impossible to determine which ones more, which ones less) include the following.

1. diverse demographic segments, the electorate encompassing a wide array of demographic groups, including variations in race, age, gender, education, and socioeconomic status;

2. regional differences in the electorate, with urban, suburban, and rural areas displaying different voting behaviors;

3. the convergence of issues related to race, gender, and class, voters prioritizing different issues depending on their individual circumstances;

4. most votes for Trump (and for Harris as well) were overdetermined, meaning that they were dictated by multiple overlapping factors (e.g., that Harris was responsible for the "border crisis" that Trump would end it, *and* that Harris was a black woman), each one *independently* guaranteeing how a vote would be cast. Such overdetermination, of itself, defeats any notion that there is a principal reason for The Catastrophe, or a principal villain for it. So does that two of the seven Catastrophe causation theories noted above (voters voting their pocketbooks, nativist views, and traditional cultural values; lower Democratic turnout) are themselves, by their terms or as explained, the product of multiple factors.

V. Psalm 30:5

On the election battlefield, the search by the vanquished for the cause or causes of their defeat is a search for a remedy or remedies. The vanquished must correctly understand what caused their defeat in order to effect those repairs (to their policies and practices, to their messaging, to their organization, to the candidates their organization puts up) that will make reasonably possible that next time out, or

if the repairs take a long time, the time after, that the once vanquished will carry the day.

Scripture (Psalm 30:5) teaches that “weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” But it does not say which morning, or how long the night will be that precedes it. In this context, given the number of causes for The Catastrophe, there being, however, no principal cause for it but instead a multiplicity of difficult to manage causes and, to boot, enough villains to go around, the best guess is that joy for the faithful will not come till after a long night of weeping–and remedial work.